



THE

ADVOCATE



The collage shown above is original artwork designed by DYRS youth with the assistance of the Maya Angelou Academy.

Youth Recognition Special Edition



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[Youth Recognition Special]

Oct.—Nov. 2009

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR YOUTH!

***AND THANK YOU TO ALL DYRS STAFF FOR
MAKING THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENTS POSSIBLE!***

**BE PROUD OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE
AND YOURSELVES!!**



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Congratulations to Our Youth Honorees!



Youth that are committed to DYRS typically don't get the type of recognition that they deserve. What could seem as an easy task for one youth can be a hurdle for another, especially if they are not provided with the basic resources in order to help them become successful young adults. Four years ago, Case Managers and the Administration decided to put together a youth recognition ceremony to recognize the achievements of the young people they work with on a regular basis. And four years later, we're happy to say our list of honorees have grown.

As the District of Columbia's juvenile justice agency, DYRS is committed to offering programs where young people can turn their lives around and flourish. In this, we provide education, services, support, and opportunities for over 700 youth under our care. Our agency is committed to the Positive Youth Development

(PYD) approach which focuses on a youth's strengths and assets rather than the deficits.

Given this, we held the 4th Annual DYRS Community Youth Recognition Ceremony to honor our youth who have enrolled in college, graduated high school, held a steady job, or achieved other personal success. In this ceremony, we highlight their successes and encourage them to continue on a positive path.

Thanks to all of our DYRS Staff for working hard to change the lives of committed and detained DYRS youth. It's because of dedicated individuals like yourselves that most of our youth are accomplishing more than anyone could ask of them. Continue with the great job and let's keep working towards building better DC communities for our young people and their families by supporting them as best we can.

We also thank our wonderful team of DYRS employees who put together an unforgettable evening of celebration, our guest speaker, Jeff Johnson for taking the time to share his words of encouragement and truth to our young folks, and last but not the least, we thank our youth for progressing towards their dream school, dream job, and/or dream home. Keep moving and stay focused on your path to success!

Congratulations to you all!

Sincerely,

Vincent Schiraldi

Youth Recognition Ceremony

On Thursday, October 15, 2009, DYRS held its 4th Annual DYRS Community Youth Recognition Ceremony at the Wilson Building. The ceremony honored DYRS youth who have enrolled in college, graduated high school, held a steady job, or achieved other personal success. With special guest speakers Mayor Fenty, Councilmember Alexander and Jeff Johnson, the special event recognized the youth's successes and encouraged them to continue on a positive path. Congratulations again to the youth that were honored! Keep up the gREATwork!

DC Nationals Fan Ambassadors

As part of this issue of recognizing youth who are doing well in the community, here is a photo and story link to two DYRS youth who are performing extremely well in their lives. Kevin and Arvel serve as Fan Ambassadors in the DC National bike valet department.



Click on the link to access the full article on [DC Nationals' Homestand News](#)

Maya Angelou Academy Scholar Award Ceremony



With the end of a systems unit, New Beginnings scholars were recognized for their academic achievement and continued efforts to improve their overall development. Several awards were given to committed youth in the areas of leadership, top scholar, most improved scholar, creativity, advocacy, and the top ten rise scholars of the semester. Youth Development Representatives were also recognized for academically supporting youth in and out of the Maya Angelou Academy.

The next page has a few of the students' readings from both September and November's ceremonies.

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A Personal Reflection by Gregory

My name is Gregory and this is a personal reflection about the life of a changed man named Mr. Socrates. I read a book during the first unit in English class titled, Always Outnumbered, Always Outgunned by Walter Mosley. The main character, Mr. Socrates, lived in a small California town called Watts. He was a convicted felon charged with two counts of murder and rape and served 27 years of his life in prison.

He goes through several changes in his life after prison and also had some ups and downs like finding a job and people in the community not trusting him because they judged him by his past instead of seeing the things he had done to gain trust since he came home from prison. He also helps a young boy named Darryl because he sees Darryl as a young person that makes some bad decisions. He tries to find a way to help Darryl so that he can believe in himself and help him make changes in his life.

This story relates to some of us that grew up in D.C. We have a lot of opportunities around us but we sometimes jump into the negative things around us instead of asking someone to help us with our problems. I was in a couple of situations like that most of the time, but I found some good ways to express myself better than committing a crime or cursing someone out. When I get back into the community, I am going to get a job and stay home with my family so my mother can sleep better at night without worrying about me or my other brothers. I know that we all made some mistakes in our lives, but we all can learn from it and live a better life. President Barack Obama says, "The more mistakes you make the better person you can become." Just because you have been through some bad stuff, you can always change it around.

Thank you all for listening to my story.

Responding to the Issue of Drugs: A Double Strategy Approach by Perry

Drugs- everyone has an opinion of them good or bad. I am going to give you a high no drug is able to provide, and that is knowledge. Our society should create a system that focuses on cartels instead of street dealers.

Two strategies I think should be put in effect are interdiction and decriminalization. No drug is grown here in the U. S. with the exception of marijuana. This means cartels are the main reason for drug trafficking in the United States, so interdiction would be a good solution. Interdiction means the intercepting and seizure of drugs before it reaches our communities. If Mexico's government and our government combined together and spent more time taking the war to these drug cartels I am sure this epidemic will decrease to a level we can deal with. In addition to interdiction efforts, we should also decriminalize harsh punishment for crack-cocaine and powder cocaine. Decriminalization means to reduce the penalties for usage, possession, and distribution for some drugs. Our government punishes at a 100-to-1 for crack-cocaine and powder cocaine ratio. This mainly affects Blacks and Hispanics because statistics show those individuals caught with crack-cocaine tend to be Black or Hispanic. If that balanced out a little more I am sure our incarceration rate will drop tremendously. There are more and different ways to deal with this problem but I believe these two would be most effective.

I am going to focus on the effects PCP and crack-cocaine drugs most commonly used for recreational purposes have on the human body. When smoking crack- cocaine one may develop brain problems and an irregular heart beat. This means if you have a baby there is a good possibility your child can gain the same addiction to the drug along with its side- effects. There are similar effects in PCP, some even worse. PCP is a hallucinogen drug that leads to psychosis, this will make you do things you would not if you were sober. This is caused by the brain lesions PCP leaves on your brain to take over your nervous system and corrupt your mind. All of these side- effects will lead to a painful death, even if slow, because drugs have a negative effect on your body.

Two perspectives that will be affected by these strategies are drug cartels and street dealers. Cartels are the big money makers in this operation because they set up the illegal trafficking and set the price of the drugs. Most of these cartels are dangerous and not only go to war with other cartels but with the law enforcement itself. Street dealers average \$7,000 to \$8,000 dollars a week. Still they get the most static as the main corrupters of our communities. Interdiction would affect both of these groups by not allowing street dealers to get their hands on drugs, and disabling the cartel to sell the drugs to United State buyers. Decriminalization would affect them by letting the street dealers get breaks when they are caught with small amounts of drugs. Then letting the cartels face the harsher punishments for the drugs they are trying to get inside of the U. S.

There are a variety of ways to approach illegal drug trafficking but in my opinion interdiction and decriminalization are best. Interdiction would prevent drugs from reaching our streets in the first place. And on the other hand decriminalization would shape some justice in our society. This is why I support these drug life changing strategies.

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Highlights of the Ceremony



Looking Ahead by Brandon (Youth Speaker)

Looking ahead, never looking back
I made it through the tough times
Now I think I'm on the right track
Do I want 2 go back, naw I'm alright
I don't want 2 go back
I'm glad I made it this far
Looking just like a star
All the haters looking from afar,
Keeping them out my arm - distant
Oh how this sound. I made it! I made it!
Now looking down without a frown.
Helping others to break the barriers without a sound
Moving as one
Now the real fun has just begun

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Samantha's Speech (Youth Speaker)

Good Evening,

First and foremost I would like to thank Ms. Michelle Hannibal for nominating me for this special event; she has been a good support to me in all the years that I've known her. I would also like to thank Ms. Bridget McLennon for inviting me and for all the information given to me that was very helpful.



As previously stated my name is, I am 19 years old from Washington DC where I was born and raised. I come from a big family, 5 brother and 4 sisters to be specific. I entered the juvenile justice system when I was 14 years old and met my social worker Ms. Hannibal when I was 16 years old and since that time I experienced living in several group homes, foster homes, as well as the Independent Living program. Initially when I entered the system I was very upset about the situation I had gotten myself into, although I was upset about being in the system it still had its advantages. Tonight I want to share with you my experiences that led me to believe that being in the system is not a bad thing at all.

The worse thing for me while growing up was me dealing with truancy, for some reason I just didn't think that school was that important to me, I just wanted to run the streets and hang out with my friends because I was new in the neighborhood and wanted to fit in. My mothers reaction to my new behaviors wasn't good at all which only made the situation worse, because on days that I attended school I got suspended and after numerous suspensions we started disagreeing on a lot of things which made me want to stay away from home most of the time to avoid conflict. In February of 2004 my older brother Charles was shot and killed at the age of 15 and just dealing with that situation itself angered me a lot because of the fact that he was so young and wasn't really able to live his life. After that my family problems only got worse and that led to the police being involved and me being removed from the home altogether.

Uncomfortable is the only word that could describe how I felt when I entered my first group home. With me never being away from home before, I was unsure and uncertain of the way things would be from this point forward. I wasn't used to having a curfew, eating dinner at a set time, doing chores daily, and living in a structured environment before. Living with people that I didn't know also was new to me because with that issue came drama in dealing with different attitudes, stealing, and worrying about getting in trouble so privileges wouldn't be lost. Even with all the negativity surrounding me it still had its advantages like me meeting my best friend and other friends too and when at times I felt like my family turned their backs on me the group home was like a second family that I could come home and rely on even when I had my bad days sometimes they would make my day better.

The people that I've met over the years have encouraged me to better my life, because in the beginning I didn't have as much motivation or the proper skills to succeed in life and with all the daily counseling, workshops, and mentoring I finally felt comfortable going back to school after going through troubles of attending different schools and GED programs I enrolled in Job Corps and received a trade in Business Administration and my High School Diploma.

I just wanted to say that although getting in the system was not a goal I took it as an opportunity to grow, strengthen my mind and to move on with my life and just hope that the youth that are here today are out there listening not only taking my advice but is taking the advice of others who are trying to help you better yourselves. And I am grateful just to be here sharing my experience and hope that my lessons learned could be yours too.

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Youth Honorees

Wards 1—4

Harry – nominated by Willie Toney
Completed commitment successfully and is currently an Honor Roll Student with straight A's.

Jazmine – nominated by Shawntelle Nesmith
She is currently in independent living at Progressive Life. She received her HS Diploma at Dunbar SHS June 2009. She will be going to Trinity College in January 2010. And continues to do well while also caring for her child.

Richard – nominated by Anthony Roberson
Earned GED, has worked consistently for 1 year. Richard has been considered for early case closure due to rehabilitation success.

Roy – nominated by Chrishawn Calmese
Successful completion of his commitment

Mikah – nominated by Elaine Russell
Mikah attends school daily and maintains a 2.5 GPA. Has been proactive in the community, volunteering to help other youth that struggle in school. Mikah tutors youth in Spanish, English and science. Although she feels she did not deserve to be involved with the legal system, she has adjusted to the demands of DYRS and is in compliance with all that is asked of her.

Davon – nominated by Elaine Russell
Davon was an honor roll student last school period and has started his senior year at High Roads. He refrains from using drugs. Davon accompanied his case manager on an outing and was true gentleman. He held the doors for ladies and very respectful to them. Davon helps his mother with his younger sisters and is always talking about them. Davon successfully completed his commitment on his birthday August 4, 2009.

Carlos – nominated by Marcial Candido
Carlos completed high school and has maintained employment for the past four months. He is preparing to start college in the fall.

Isis – nominated by Shirley Burnett
Completed summer youth employment successfully. Over the summer months this youth has demonstrated change in follow up and follow through. She received a letter of recommendation from her employer for other employment opportunities

Ward 5 & 6

Jahmar - nominated by Carolyn Prince-White
Completed the Program at New Beginnings Model Unit and went to graduate High School and is now starting classes at Coppin State College in Baltimore, MD. Overcome adversity with drug use to achieve a bright future.

Bryant – nominated by George Lipscomb

Rashad – nominated by Robert Bacon
Completed Program at Keystone, Graduated from DC High School

Roland – nominated by Robert Bacon
Completed his GED, Accepted to Delaware State. Recognized for leadership at Sasha Bruce

Malone - nominated by Robert Bacon
Earned GED

Reginald - nominated by Robert Bacon
Earned GED

Kevon – nominated by Willie Calhoun
Successfully completed Devereux, Fla Program and a successful transition back to Washington DC.

Octavious – nominated by Willie Calhoun
Successful in completing Group Home program. No incident, no positive Drug Tests. Working and completed summer job.

Jasmine – nominated by Carolyn Prince-White
Returned to Public School environment and Graduated High School after a long period of Visiting Home Instruction. Enrolled in Day School and Night School to accomplish Graduation on schedule. Currently working and enrolled at PGCC. Goal driven and focused to achieve despite adversity. Jasmine is determined to overcome her circumstances and achieve a successful future.

Tristian – nominated by Carolyn Prince-White
Goal driven and focused to achieve despite adversity. Out spoken, advocate for himself and what he believes.

Darrell – nominated by Stephanie Edwards
Darrell is a shining star. He has done exceptionally well for over a year. I recently closed his case because of his successful rehabilitation. He completed Earth Conservation as a core student with awards and certificates. He has full time employment working as a docks man at the Pier Marina making a sizable income. He opened a checking account and is actively saving his money. He got his drivers license. He is near completing his GED and is interested in going to a community college. His mother is ecstatic of the changes Darrell has made with his life and so am I.

Sharif – nominated by Robert Bacon

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Ward 7

Carlos – nominated by Adina Fuller

Carlos has realized how his decision making impacts his personal growth and maturational process. He will be pursuing an AA degree in Business Administration and taking real estate courses. He is currently employed full time as an Optical Technician at America's Best, a trade he was certified in through services provided during his commitment.

Omesa – nominated by Alma Scott Richardson

Omesa obtained her HS diploma this year and is currently attending UDC

Raysheeka – nominated by Amy Goldwasser

Raysheeka had taken exceptional leadership and participation in work and community service at Sasha Bruce Youth Works.

Cortez – nominated by John Summers

Enrolled in GED program. Currently succeeded and programming in Progressive Life.

Brandon – nominated by Kim Higgs

Completed GED and is actively seeking admission to college. Proactive with his case, calling potential placement directly and secured interviews for successful acceptance into program

Michael – nominated by Kim Higgs

Attended summer school and program through Coolidge to get caught up with credits while working summer employment. Initiated contacting his principal to check on school credits and his progress. Despite being older than other students, Michael is still considering pursuit of his high school diploma.

Blake – nominated by Kim Higgs

Attended Perry School GED program daily until she realized program was not meeting her needs. Asked for placement in program that would help her improve weaker subjects on GED prep. Worked daily at Duke Ellington for summer job. Initiated seeking employment with DC Public Library. Demonstrated excellent customer services as hostess at local restaurant. Identified as a leader through independent living program.

Akbar – nominated by Kim Higgs

Completed make up artistry class at Bennett School of Cosmetology. Completed certification for photo lab tech at CVS. Promoted to work in pilot store (beauty store) through CVS in Dupont Circle. Despite discharge from Progressive Life ILP due to case closure, adjusted well to transition and sought out new apartment on own

Dena – nominated by Kim Higgs

Enrolled in night school while waiting for acceptance to Job Corp took initiative in making sure that there were no lapses in education while awaiting enrollment date to Job Corp. Youth seeks out help from adults at Job Corps. She is not afraid to ask questions and fully understands that knowledge is power. Her father was facing eviction, Dena called Job Corps daily to get them to expedite her acceptance to Job Corp so she could secure placement for herself.

Donald – nominated by Kim Higgs

Shantell – nominated by Michelle Hannibal

Made the Honor Roll at Booker T. Washington

Anna – nominated by Michelle Hannibal

Consistent will GED program at Covenant House Washington

Samantha (YOUTH SPEAKER) – nominated by Michelle Hannibal

Graduated from Job Corps in August 2009. She will be attending UDC in the Spring 2010 to study Criminology. She has been in several programs with DYRS from ILP, group home, foster home and so on and loves to speak to other youth about her transformation.

Brandon (YOUTH SPEAKER)

Ward 8

Christopher – nominated by Charles Akinboyewa

Earned his GED

Trayon – nominated by Charles Akinboyewa

Earned his GED

Jamil – nominated by Charles Akinboyewa

Earned his GED through the Transition School

Antwon – nominated by Jeff Hammond

First Youth from DYRS to attend Free State Military School

Kevin – nominated by Jeff Hammond

Graduated from Luke C. Moore, earning his high school Diploma

Bijon – nominated by Steve D. Smith

Youth has been on the Honor Roll the whole 2009 school year and was chosen to be a part of the leadership program in which he went to Denver, Colorado to attend the upward bound program. Youth has recently returned home after successfully completing his program.

Brianna – nominated by Tracy Parker

She successfully completed the ITPM services. Brianne is a wonderful young lady who is working hard to change her life around. She is currently residing at Keystone Job Corp in Drum. PA. Brianne has always taken initiative at school and home to better her life.

Akeem - nominated by David Muhammad

For successful completion of the Transformative Mentoring Group and outstanding leadership in the group.

